

*24<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast*

## **The San Francisco Interfaith Council**



Tuesday, November 26, 2024

7:00 am – 9:00 am

*Hotel Kabuki, San Francisco*



**Celebrating our diverse faiths**  
and spiritual traditions,  
the San Francisco Interfaith Council  
brings people together  
to build understanding  
and serve our community.

## **San Francisco Interfaith Council**

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# *Welcome to the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast*

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The San Francisco Interfaith Council welcomes you to the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast. The Council exists to serve and give voice to our City's 800 congregations, their respective judicatories, and the faith-based social service agencies that provide the safety net for San Francisco's most vulnerable residents.

The Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast is our major event of the year, when representatives of the faith community, civic leaders and residents come together to give thanks for the gifts bestowed on our City and to pray for the well being of all of our residents.

Each year at this breakfast, we shine the spotlight on the important contributions the religious community makes to the life of San Francisco. This year we celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the San Francisco Interfaith Council (SFIC). A little known fact is that the SFIC was born as a result of the Loma Prieta earthquake. Just a year earlier, at the behest of Mayor Art Agnos, religious leaders responded to the burgeoning homeless crisis by initiating the Interfaith Winter Shelter, which just commenced its 36<sup>th</sup> year of feeding and sheltering 80 homeless people from November 25<sup>th</sup> through the end of March. Those same religious leaders were invited to a meeting at Calvary Presbyterian Church in the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake to assist the humanitarian aid organization, Church World Service, in distributing vital funds to the most vulnerable residents displaced by the earthquake. Realizing the importance of interfaith collaboration after the earthquake, those religious leaders committed to creating today's San Francisco Interfaith Council. Since then, in addition to responding to homelessness, the SFIC's work centers on civil rights, housing affordability, disaster preparedness and immigration defense.

On this milestone anniversary the SFIC highlights our work over the past 35 years to make our City a better community for all. We particularly honor the SFIC's founders and early participants for their vision, commitment, and hard work. We continue to celebrate the SFIC's hopes and vision for the bright future of interfaith collaboration.

We are grateful for your presence here today and hope that this experience will inspire you to participate in the many important activities of the San Francisco Interfaith Council.

## *Milestones in Our History*

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- 1988 First emergency homeless shelter organized
- 1989 Committee formed to respond to Loma Prieta earthquake effects
- 1992 San Francisco Interfaith Council incorporated as religious non-profit
- 1992 Following Loma Prieta earthquake, interfaith committee formed to monitor City's regulations with respect to unreinforced masonry buildings
- 1992 Helped organize and served as fiscal agent for CARD (Community Agencies Responding to Disaster)
- 1993 SFIC led effort to establish interfaith presence at new national park in the Presidio
- 1994 First participated in CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty) Hunger Walk
- 1995 Interfaith Center at the Presidio spun off from SFIC and incorporated as separate non-profit
- 1997 SFIC starts and funds Interfaith Chaplain Program at Juvenile Hall
- 1998 First official office for SFIC opens at Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center at 401 Baker Street
- 1998 SFIC forms interfaith Child Task Force providing supplies, backpacks, and free books to underserved children throughout the City
- 1998 First Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast
- 1999 First interfaith concert
- 2001 Became local advisory board for *First Book*, a national literacy effort for underserved children
- 2001 Shortly after 9/11, organized interfaith service of remembrance which filled Bill Graham Auditorium
- 2002 First Monthly Breakfast meeting for faith leaders and laypersons
- 2003 SFIC office moves to the Presidio Chapel at 130 Fisher Loop
- 2005 Organized interfaith home building project with Habitat for Humanity
- 2006 Organized first Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Congregations
- 2007 SFIC Board of Directors approves hiring Michael G. Pappas as its first full-time Executive Director
- 2010 First convening of CEOs of major faith-based social service agencies
- 2011 SFIC assumes sponsorship of MLK Day march and interfaith service at Yerba Buena Gardens
- 2011 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 interfaith remembrance event in Golden Gate Park with the San Francisco Opera
- 2013 First WinterFaith Shelter Walk to benefit the San Francisco Interfaith Winter Shelter
- 2014 SFIC convenes group of faith and non-profit leaders to work on income inequality issues with emphasis on essential housing
- 2014 SFIC celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- 2014 Rita R. Semel Endowment Fund for Interfaith Work receives \$100,000 donation from The George and Judy Marcus Family Foundation
- 2015 \$3 million donation received to fund first "Navigation Center" for the homeless
- 2017 SFIC collaborates with Bay Area interfaith councils in North Bay fire response efforts
- 2017 SFIC receives \$100,000 donation from The Janet and Clint Reilly Family Foundation
- 2018 SFIC played a leadership role in the creation of SF's first 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance
- 2018 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Interfaith Winter Shelter
- 2019 Invited by Governor Gavin Newsom to host an interfaith prayer service on the morning of his inauguration at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sacramento
- 2019 SFIC receives critical funding to take leadership role in 2020 SF decennial census
- 2019 First convening of Aging/Adult Services and Faith Communities Round Table
- 2019 First "Security in Houses of Worship" Workshop
- 2019 SFIC celebrates 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- 2020 SFIC designated primary liaison faith sector in the San Francisco COVID-19 response
- 2020 First online briefings commenced
- 2021 SFIC Founder and Past Chair Rita R. Semel Celebrates 100th Birthday
- 2021 Rita R. Semel Endowment Fund for Interfaith Work receives \$50,000 donation from The Celebrate Foundation
- 2023 Invited by Governor Gavin Newsom to host an interfaith prayer service on the morning of his inauguration at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Sacramento
- 2023 SFIC collaborates with Department of Disability & Aging Services and Institute on Aging to offer "Empowering Older Adults" online trainings for clergy and lay leaders
- 2023 Bay Area interfaith councils collaborate to produce anti-hate public service announcements and launch at the Presidio Chapel
- 2023 35th Anniversary of Interfaith Winter Shelter
- 2024 SFIC collaborates with DCG Strategies "Ministry of Housing" in-person and online series workshops
- 2024 SFIC Celebrates 35th Anniversary

# Homelessness, bigotry targeted by interfaith council

BY TAMAR KAUFMAN  
Of the Bulletin Staff

Smoke signals from the Los Angeles riots are being read in San Francisco, where Jews, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists have joined together to tackle homelessness, bigotry and other social ills.

A year in the making, the S.F. Interfaith Council already has 50 dues-paying member groups, and now that it's an official non-profit, organizers are turning their attention to the task at hand.

Several local crises spurred the Interfaith Council into being, according to executive vice chair Rita Semel.

The first, the growing number of homeless in San Francisco, inspired more than 70 congregations and organizations to create an emergency shelter program now entering its fifth year.

The second, the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, again brought religious leaders together in an ad hoc relief committee; a third crisis — the execution of convicted murderer Robert Alton Harris — came up in April when many of the same religious leaders joined together to protest the death penalty.

But "we were tired of having to reinvent ourselves every time there was a crisis," says Semel, executive director emeritus of the S.F.-based Jewish Community Relations Council.

"There's also concern about the David Dukes of the world and, reinforced by the Los Angeles riots, we realized in a city like San Francisco people need to get to know



Photo by Mike Richman  
**Charting the future of the S.F. Interfaith Council are (from left) Buddhist priest Laverne Sasaki, Rabbi Martin Weiner, Lutheran Rev. Richard Schaper and Rita Semel, executive vice chair.**

each other on a human and personal basis," she says. "Where better than through churches and synagogues? I think it's true they can set the moral tone for a community and that's what we're talking about — values and ethics and ways of behaving."

She'll get no argument from the Rev. Richard Schaper. The pastor of St. Marks Lutheran Church and chair of the new Interfaith Council,

multiplicity of religious traditions."

Contrasting the broadly based Interfaith Council with the councils of churches common in other cities, Schaper says. "It's clear we're in this together as equal partners together with people of other faiths. Given the historical anti-Semitism in many Christian churches, this is a significant development."

Rabbi Mark Schifman of Temple Emanu-El and Martin Weiner of Congregation Sherith Israel echo that pride in the organization.

"I think we have a very effective organizational structure which can address community social service needs and build bridges of understanding among the various faiths," Weiner says, welcoming in particular the opportunity for Jews to work with Buddhists and Hindus.

Schifman cites the emergency shelter program as one area where interfaith cooperation has paid off.

"It's only the beginning of what's possible," he says. "No matter what one's politics, we have to deal with the results, and the reality is that for the past 12 years the American people have wanted a government that has had a hands-off policy toward these issues. In light of that, the Interfaith Council has to step in."

from the White House," he says. "But when one lives in a place like San Francisco, the obvious is even more bluntly obvious — that we're in a pluralistic society with a

to grow in mutual knowledge and respect" and notes that combating bigotry tops the agenda. That will be done by examining "how the racism in our society is reflected in our respective faith communities," he says.

Another issue for Schaper is "Christians on the right" who claim America is a Christian nation. Such rhetoric "has even come

*San Francisco Interfaith Council*  
*Founders and Chairs*

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(in order of service)

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## *Interfaith Winter Shelter Host Sites and Partners*

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Calvary Presbyterian Church \*  
Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption #  
Episcopal Community Services' Canon Kip Senior Center #  
First Congregational Church  
First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco \* #  
Grace Cathedral \*  
Old First Presbyterian Church \*  
Old St. Mary's Cathedral \*  
St. Boniface Catholic Church  
St. Paulus Lutheran Church  
St. Mark's Lutheran Church #  
Trinity+St. Peter's Episcopal Church

(\* First Interfaith Winter Shelter Site)  
(# Current Interfaith Winter Shelter Site)

### **Partners**

Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing \*  
Episcopal Community Services  
San Francisco Night Ministry  
St. Vincent de Paul Society #

(\* Major funder of the Interfaith Winter Shelter)  
(# First agency to provide staff)

# *Interfaith Winter Shelter Meal Providers*

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2023 – 2024 Season

## **Meal Providers**

Bridgepoint Community Church  
Buddhist Church of San Francisco  
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation  
Calvary Presbyterian Church  
Congregation Beth Shalom  
Congregation Emanu-El  
Congregation Sherith Israel  
Cook Rite  
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Episcopal Church of St. Mary the Virgin  
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Forest Hill Christian Church  
Holy Innocents Episcopal Church  
Holy Trinity Cathedral  
Knights of St. Francis  
Ladies Prayer Group  
Mission Dolores Basilica  
Mission Parishes First Year Confirmation Class  
Morse Lodge #257 I.O.O.F. and Girl Scouts  
Noe Valley Ministry Presbyterian Church

Or Shalom Jewish Community  
Presbyterian Church in Chinatown  
RescueSF  
Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory  
San Francisco Islamic School  
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Congregation  
San Francisco Zen Center  
Seventh Avenue Presbyterian Church  
St. Francis Episcopal Church  
St. John Armenian Apostolic Church  
St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
St. Stephen Parish  
St. Teresa of Avila Church  
St. Vincent de Paul  
St. Vincent de Paul Conference - St. Mary's  
Cathedral  
Sunset Ward LDS Church  
Temple United Methodist Church  
Unity Spiritual Center  
Zoom International

# *Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfasts*

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## **1998 – 2024**

- 11/24/1998 Leaves of Blessing: Prayers for the City
- 11/23/1999 Dawn Blessings for Our City
- 11/21/2000 Embracing Our Children and Our Youth
- 11/20/2001 Caring for the City's Children
- 11/26/2002 Moving On and Reaching Out to Our Children and Youth
- 12/02/2003 Prayers from Faith Communities in the City
- 11/23/2004 Healing a Troubled World
- 11/22/2005 Serving Our City Together
- 11/21/2006 Honoring Models of Hope: Creating a Peaceful City
- 11/20/2007 Honoring Models of Hope: Recognizing Organizations Overcoming Violence
- 11/25/2008 Feeding the Hungry: Honoring Congregations and the San Francisco Food Bank
- 11/24/2009 Honoring Congregations for Disaster Preparedness
- 11/23/2010 Honoring the Unsung Healers: Hospital and Hospice Chaplains
- 11/22/2011 Repairing the World: Honoring the Work of Rita R. Semel
- 11/20/2012 Going Green: Honoring Congregations and California Interfaith Power & Light for Their Environmental Leadership
- 11/26/2013 Honoring Veterans and the Faith Communities that Serve Them
- 11/25/2014 Celebrating 25 Years of Faith-Based Collaboration: Together We Can Do More!
- 11/24/2015 Faith and Sanctuary: There Are No Strangers
- 11/22/2016 The Soul of the City: Faith and Social Justice in San Francisco
- 11/21/2017 Communities of Faith Nurturing Education in our City
- 11/20/2018 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Observance of Interfaith Winter Shelter
- 11/26/2019 Celebrating 30 Years of Interfaith Collaboration in San Francisco
- 11/21/2023 35th Anniversary Observance of Interfaith Winter Shelter
- 11/26/2024 Honoring the 35th Anniversary of the Founding of the San Francisco Interfaith Council

# *Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Services*

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## **2005 – 2024**

11/24/2005	Congregation Emanu-El
11/23/2006	Grace Cathedral
11/22/2007	St. Ignatius Parish
11/27/2008	First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco
11/26/2009	Calvary Presbyterian Church
11/25/2010	Third Baptist Church
11/24/2011	The Konko Church
11/22/2012	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
11/28/2013	Buddhist Church of San Francisco
11/27/2014	Congregation Sherith Israel
11/26/2015	Baha'i Community of San Francisco
11/24/2016	San Francisco Swedenborgian Church
11/23/2017	Old First Presbyterian Church
11/22/2018	Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist
11/28/2019	Presidio Chapel
11/24/2020	"Thanksgiving 2020: A Time for Healing" (virtual)
11/23/2021	"A Thanksgiving to Remember" Honoring the 100th Birthday of San Francisco Interfaith Council Founder and Past Chair Rita R. Semel at Congregation Emanu-El
11/22/2022	"Reimagining Thanksgiving" at St. Mark's Lutheran Church
11/23/2023	Presidio Chapel
11/28/2024	Presidio Chapel

# *Disaster Preparedness Workshops for Congregations*

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## **2006 – 2019**

- 2006 Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina
- 2008 Creating a Culture of Preparedness
- 2010 Global Lessons for Local Use
- 2012 Building Resilience Beyond Our Walls
- 2014 Congregations Responding to Everyday Disasters
- 2016 Crisis to Resilience: Congregations Understanding and Responding to Climate Change Impacts
- 2019 Security in Houses of Worship

## *Major Funders*

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Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

1 Chronicles 16:34



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Christ Church, Lutheran  
Church Women United  
Congregation Sha'ar Zahav  
First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco  
Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery  
Konko Church of San Francisco  
Old First Presbyterian Church  
Seventh Avenue Presbyterian Church  
St. Francis Lutheran Church Endowment  
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# San Francisco Interfaith Council

**OUR MISSION:** History teaches us that many of the world’s conflicts are rooted in religious strife. Founded in 1988, the San Francisco Interfaith Council (SFIC) seeks to counter this historical trend by celebrating our diverse faiths and spiritual traditions, bringing people together to build understanding, and serving our community.

## Convening, Communicating, and Advocacy

The San Francisco Interfaith Council’s work centers on civil rights, homelessness, housing affordability, and disaster preparedness. The SFIC convenes and amplifies the voice of our city’s faith-based community on these important issues.

**WHO WE SERVE:** We count as our constituents the 800 congregations in the City of San Francisco, their respective judicatories, sectarian educational and healthcare institutions, and the faith-based social service agencies that provide the social safety net for our most vulnerable residents.

**OUR WORK:** During this time of social change in San Francisco, civic leaders and the public view the SFIC as the “go-to” organization for mobilizing our City’s religious communities. Congregations and faith-based agencies turn to us for resources, referral and representation. Our robust relationships and communications network allow the SFIC to bring together and mobilize San Francisco’s faith-based community to create an effective, combined force for service and issues of public policy, so that we may accomplish together what no single congregation can alone.

### CIVIL RIGHTS:

San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship  
 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
 Observance and Interfaith Service  
 Implicit Bias Training for Congregation  
 Leaders

### DISASTER PREPAREDNESS:

Biennial Disaster Preparedness  
 Workshop for Congregations

### HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY:

San Francisco Interfaith Essential  
 Housing Task Force  
 San Francisco Navigation Center  
 Interfaith Winter Homeless Shelter  
 Annual Walk Against Hunger  
 Annual Interfaith Memorial for the  
 Homeless Dead

### CONVENING AND ADVOCACY:

Monthly Interfaith Breakfast  
 Crisis Response Communications  
 Faith Based Social Service Agencies  
 CEO Roundtable  
 Annual Walk & Bike to Worship Week  
 Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast &  
 Thanksgiving Day Service  
 Interfaith World AIDS Day Service  
 Annual Interfaith Observance Calendar

We invite you to join in our work.  
 Please contact us to find out more.

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Executive Director: Michael G. Pappas, M.Div.





Your contribution will enable the San Francisco Interfaith Council to continue to engage in activities vital to interfaith cooperation, philanthropic service and social justice.



Please visit: <https://sfic.harnessgiving.org/donate/>

or mail your contribution to:

**San Francisco Interfaith Council**

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**Thank you for your support!**